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JUSTICE FOR DAVID WARNER AND PATRICIA PETTY  
DHS FOR CHER IANNACCONE  
TREASURY FOR HEATHER MOYE

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TAGS: [KCOR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CM](#)  
SUBJECT: CAMEROON: NEW TWISTS IN ANTI-CORRUPTION COOPERATION

REF: 07 YAOUNDE 1236

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Scott Ticknor for reasons  
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¶1. (C) Summary: Minister of Justice Amadou Ali's anti-corruption effort, with USG support, made headline news in Cameroon on January 9. Ambassador Garvey and the Ambassadors of Italy and the Netherlands met with Ali that evening. The Minister reaffirmed his and President Biya's commitment to moving forward with anti-corruption efforts, including cooperation to identify the possible overseas accounts of proceeds from corruption involving senior officials. He has created a new anti-moneylaundering "cell" but is frustrated with the USDOJ's "legalistic" approach to cooperation. The Ambassadors will seek an early meeting with Biya to discuss his anti-corruption efforts. End summary.

#### Background

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¶2. (C) Several months ago, Minister of Justice Amadou Ali approached post and the Embassies of Canada, the UK, Italy and the Netherlands to assist in investigating overseas funds of senior corrupt officials, with the primary goal of repatriating the ill-gotten money (reftel). The Minister sent the U.S. Department of Justice a Mutual Legal Assistance request and on December 17 post sent the Minister a response from USDOJ that highlighted the need for more information and clarity about the legal authorities implicated in the request. USDOJ also asked the Minister to identify an official counterpart and to clarify the judicial basis for the request.

#### The Press Gets the Story

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¶3. (SBU) On January 9, Cameroonian media was dominated by the story of a document from Minister of Justice Amadou Ali naming 64 senior officials and prominent personalities as part of a corruption investigation. It indicated that the Ministry was working with the U.S., British and Canadian governments to identify the proceeds of corruption which may

be stashed in foreign banks. On January 8, Minister Ali sent a letter notifying Ambassador that he had formed a cell within the Ministry to work with the Action Group against Moneylaundering in Central Africa (GABAC) on issues of moneylaundering and financial crime. The cell is composed of: 1) Minister Ali, 2) Francis Dooh Collins (in charge of international financial investigations), 3) Josette Essomba Ripault, Inspector General of Judicial Services (in charge of relations with GABAC), assisted by Inspector Salatou Baba, and 4) Izatou Yerima Lamine (Secretary).

#### Meeting Ali

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¶4. (C) Ambassador, Dutch Ambassador Norbert Braakhuis, and Italian Ambassador Antonio Bellavia met with Minister Ali on January 9 to clarify his role and the GRC's position. The Minister seemed unfazed by the media's coverage of this story, saying none of the documents we had given the GRC in this case were compromised and that neither he nor we should be overly concerned. He did not plan to react to the press stories unless the President asked him to and opined that the story would die away in a week or so. He was not even sure the President was aware of the media coverage since he was traveling in his village. In any case, most Cameroonians were happy with this story, Ali ventured. Ali had a complicated explanation for how the story leaked to the press: a French national who had been a part of Dooh Collins' team before the Israeli Government asked that he be excluded (NFI) shared the information with the head of French intelligence, who in turn passed it to the Secretary General at the Presidency, Laurent Esso, whom Ali perceives to be beholden to French interests in Cameroon and aligned against Ali's anti-corruption efforts. He conceded there was an ongoing, complex internal political battle, with detractors trying to neutralize his anti-corruption efforts and him politically, and possibly physically as well. Not everyone named in the list is necessarily guilty, he added.

¶5. (C) Ali reiterated his and the President's continued commitment to combating corruption, identifying and recovering looted funds located outside the country, and punishing corrupt officials. Ali said he would reinforce this message in a public event later in the week, citing the President's October France 24 interview, New Year's message to the nation and New Year's speech to diplomats as proof of Biya's commitment to an anti-corruption agenda. Ali said the President had personally approved each of the names leaked to the press and even added some of the names personally. Furthermore, Biya had asked Cameroon's National Agency for Financial Investigations (Cameroon's Financial Intelligence Unit, known by its French acronym, ANIF) and the Delegate General for National Security (the national police) to investigate a list of 27 officials for involvement in corrupt practices. He said judicial processes were underway for ten other individuals, and that his new anti-moneylaundering cell would move forward with investigating overseas funds from these cases. Once the President has approved the ANIF list of 27, the GRC could take action against their overseas funds as well, he said.

#### Frustrations with USDOJ

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¶6. (SBU) Ali was clearly frustrated with the recent USDOJ letter, saying that if he knew where the ill-gotten funds were he would not need USG help. He pressed for a "less legalistic" approach, saying that in these days of tracking down terrorist finances, surely the USG had other methods to track illicit money. He estimated that the overseas corrupt proceeds totaled \$5-10 billion, twice the GRC's annual budget.

#### Next Steps

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¶7. (C) The Ambassadors proposed a meeting with President Biya soon to discuss the anti-corruption effort. Ali

supported the idea, noting that past diplomatic intervention had greatly influenced the President's decisions in combating corruption. Post will reach out to the Minister's new anti-moneylaunders cell to see if we can help them craft a request that will be acceptable to USDOJ. We do not recommend any Washington action on this issue at this time.

Comment

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18. (C) Ali's reassurances of continued support on anti-corruption efforts are welcome. We hope the new lists of 10 and 27 (and he mentioned the Prime Minister has yet another list) will bear fruit. However, the new cell has few new names and retains a prominent role for Dooh Collins, whose credentials and motives are questionable. We were surprised at Ali's dismissiveness about the press stories, especially since the published list could seriously exacerbate internal political tensions within the Cabinet. Ali's frustration with the legalities of the USDOJ approach also gives us pause. We hope to use a meeting with Biya to reinforce the importance of the legal processes and the need to avoid politicizing this important effort.

GARVEY